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Traitor

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Traitor

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I WENT to my car at noon to wait for Julie. I knew Wessel must really be mad at her this time. He called her out of lit class before I could get a note to her. He always got madder because he could never get Julie upset.

"Hi."

I jumped. Julie threw her books in the car and climbed into the back seat.

"How'd it go?"

She stifled a laugh. "He's all shook up because I skipped classes again yesterday."

We laughed.

"That's four times this week," she said.

We giggled again. I didn't know how she got away with it. I never skipped a day in my life.

"I can see Wessel getting all upset," I said. I wondered how he would look mad. Most of the time around students he had a smile stuck on his face.

Julie laid back on the seat and put her feet out of the window of the car. "I really hate him. He's such a greaser. The oil is just slimy in his hair. I bet he just drools it on every morning. I hate him to even come near me."

"I heard he backed Mrs. Kirekgaard up against the wall in his office and tried to feel her."

"Ick." Julie stuck out her tongue and shuddered. "I bet weasel has greasy hands, too."

She unwrapped her sandwich and started to eat. She wanted me to ask her what happened and I didn't want to seem too eager. Outside, groups of girls and guys were laughing and talking together. I couldn't hear what they were saying. I was staring at them and one of the guys looked right at me. I looked down at my book quickly and felt my face grow warm.

"What did Wessel say to you?" I asked Julie. I hoped she wouldn't see my face was red.

Suddenly a head stuck through the window right next to my face. "It would be easier if you two were in the back seat together." He laughed and I heard his friends laughing, too.

Julie threw her drink into his face. "Fuck off, bastard." He jerked his head back, and I rolled up the window.

Julie threw the rest of her sandwich on the floor and sat up. Some of the liquid dripped in my hair. I took a kleenex and tried to wipe it out, but my hand shook too much.

"What did Wessel say to you?" I felt the tears tight in my throat. Julie leaned back in the seat again.

"He called my mother, and she told him I wasn't home sick yesterday."

"Where were you?"

"I was home." She giggled to herself, but I didn't laugh.

"What'd you do?"

She sat up and looked at me very seriously. "Sat in the basement and picked my nose." I exploded laughing and it made me mad.

"Oh, yuck. Come on, Julie. What did you do?"

She lay back in the seat again and opened a book.

"I sat down in the basement under my mother's bedroom and listened to her and her friend in bed."

She waited for my question, but I did not say anything. It might be a joke, and I didn't want to look stupid. She always talked about her mother but she had never said anything about this before.

"They were at it all day. I could hear the bed springs squeaking and my mother saying 'oh, no, no' and gasping. They're really disgusting."

"Who is he?"

"Some rich guy who flies in from Chicago just to see her. He says he wants to marry her as soon as he can get a divorce."

"He's married?" She always knew how to shock me.

"He brings presents for us everytime he comes, and

he tries to talk to me. I hate him. Mother said if I don't act nice to him I could find some place else to live."

I couldn't believe her. I'd seen her mother, and she looked like anyone else.

"She's not going to tell me what to do anymore. Not when she runs around with a married man." She sounded like she was mad at me.

"Maybe she really loves him," I said.

Julie did not say anything. I knew she was mad at me now.

"She doesn't love him. All she cares about is the little retards she works with at the school."

I didn't want to laugh, and I choked it off.

"Why does she see him then?"

"For sex."

"Come on, Julie. Your mother's not like that."

"What do you know about it?" She glared at me. I turned my head and looked down at my sandwich.

"What are you going to do, Julie?"

"I think I'll go back to Florida."

"Can you stay with your Dad?"

She laughed. "He doesn't care about me. He doesn't send any money. I don't even know where he lives."

I didn't know what to say. I wadded my lunch sack into a ball and rolled the window down to throw it out. The warning bell rang and others moved back into school.

"We'd better get back," I said. She picked up her books, and we walked back to school in silence. I waited for her at her locker, wanting to say something more to her.

"Look, Julie. Don't run away. As soon as we graduate you can leave for college."

"I don't want to go to school anymore."

"But what will you do?"

"But who cares?" She laughed. I felt like a fool.

Julie dug through the mess in the bottom of her locker. Everyone was going into classes. I felt a hand on my arm and turned around.

"Hi, Janis." He took his hand off of me quickly.

"Hi," I mumbled. It was one of the guys from lit class. He had red hair and a bad complexion.

"I wanted to talk to you after class, but you rushed off so fast."

I looked down.

"Look, there's a party Saturday night for seniors, and I'd like to take you, I mean, if you don't have a date."

"No, I'd really like to," I gasped. Then I shut up. He'd probably think I really liked him now.

"OK. Hey, I've got to go. I'll call you tonight." He ran to class. Julie slammed her locker door, and I turned back around. She looked away from me quickly. I had forgotten all about her.

"He's really weird, isn't he, Julie?" I tried. "Did you see the potholes in his face? He wants me to go out with him." I forced a laugh.

"But who cares?" She turned her back to me, flung her purse over her shoulder, and walked down the hallway alone.